

Sevenoaks District Council

4th April 2023

Dear Sue Lindsey,

Re: Ephesus licensing application number 23/00398/LAPRE

We are writing as a local resident to formally object to the application by the Ephesus restaurant and bar to extend its licensing hours on Friday and Saturday evenings.

We have objected in writing to previous licensing and planning applications made in the past two years. The situation and context of the Ephesus and its surroundings has not changed in that time. Our reasons for objecting to this application are consistent with our previous objections.

We are objecting to this application as we do not feel that the site of the Ephesus bar/restaurant is appropriate for a late opening bar/club. Our concerns are:

Significant noise disturbance to the local residents - which falls under Public Nuisance.

The area is of quiet residential character, within a conservation area. Residents live in close proximity to the Ephesus (including the Rockdale supported living home for the elderly). Our property is within ear shot of the sound of patrons of the Ephesus and potentially music (which has disturbed us in the past). A later license is likely to increase the noise disturbance to residents and harm the quiet residential character of the area.

Also, the rear terrace of the Ephesus is enclosed by lightweight materials; plastic sheeting and a retractable fabric roof. This construction offers very little sound reduction, enabling the voices of patrons to be audible by local residents', disturbing the peace.

This may be more of a planning matter than licensing, but, normally an acoustic assessment of the building fabric would have been carried out, to assess the acoustic performance of the construction, to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose'. Has an assessment been submitted with the application.

A Traffic Impact Assessment would also be a necessary part of a review of planning application material.

Public safety

The applicant is seeking longer opening hours including alcohol sales (1:30 am Friday and 2:00 am Saturday). The longer hours of drinking leaves us greatly concerned about the potential for anti-social behaviour in the area.

Have the police been consulted to assess against their Crime Prevention Plan?

We are concerned that the patrons queuing to enter or smoking outside of the Ephesus block the narrow footway in front of the bar/restaurant. Currently, it is not uncommon to need to step into the road to pass by the bar. The people blocking the footway usually unaware of people needing to pass by.

Prevention of crime and disorder

There does seem to be a pattern of people gathering late at night in the small park close to the Ephesus when the bar/restaurant is busy. The park is located on the corner of Six Bells Lane and the High Street. This causes additional noise disturbance, and we are concerned this will increase with later licensing. It is also an issue that is probably difficult for the Ephesus to manage, and for the police to prevent. The park is locked/gated at night, so people must be climbing over the wall to enter it.

Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan (March 2021 Final Draft)

Please be aware of Section 2.3 'Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan' 'Movement and public realm', which sets-out the need to promote pedestrian movement in the town centre at this 'significant junction'.

The congestion on the footway that is likely to be caused goes against the sentiment of this strategy.

Conservation Area

Relevant extracts from: Sevenoaks High Street Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Planning Guidance 2008):

1.3 Conservation areas can also play a key part in promoting economic prosperity by ensuring that an area offers attractive living and working conditions which encourage further investment.

We do not feel that the application fits with the sentiment of this statement.

Managing a conservation area is as much about preserving character as it is historic building fabric.

Lastly we feel there should also be consideration to the rich diversity of birdlife in this area, including many nesting birds, at a time when so many bird species are in decline. Research has shown that loud music can impact bird behaviour and reproduction.

To conclude, we **strongly object** to this application and hope that Sevenoaks Council see sense in not granting this application for a late license to protect the character of the area, the health and safety of its residents, and not to set a precedent for out of character development in Sevenoaks town.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Monk and Ly Truong